

Raja Yoga: The Royal Road to Realisation

--- Swami Samarpanananda

What is Yoga?

Every religion is founded on the spiritual realisations of a prophet, or of sages. These founders set certain ideals for their followers, with the hope that they will attain the highest aim of their life by practising those ideals. However, with the passage of time these ideals get diluted due to wrong understanding of the ideal by the followers, or due to their overpowering desires for power and pelf.

When the dilution crosses a limit, the adherents either lose faith, or lose sight of the very purpose of religion. That is when emotionalism, irrationality, and fanaticism enter the religion. To stop this rot, it is essential that people have a science of spirituality, against which their own practices can be judged and set right.

Yoga is that science of spirituality. It is the purifying fire in which the garbage of a religion can be burnt down. Being the exalted art and the practical science of spirituality, it commands a special respect among all other paths to realisation. That is why it is also known as the royal road to realisation, *Raja Yoga*.

Yoga assumes nothing, accepts nothing that is wild, and tolerates no hocus pocus in its practice. It is not meant for the weak in the body, nor can it be practised by the weak in mind, resolve, or spirit. Even a little practise of it gives one concrete results, and opens higher doors to wisdom. And, what to say of practices, even a mere study of this science is capable of removing doubts and confusion from one's mind.

Derived from the root *Yuj*, the word 'Yoga' means union. But it is also used in a special sense by the practitioners of different paths of spiritual realisation. To a karma yogi, it signifies the union between an individual and the whole; to a Raja yogi (mystic), it means the union between his lower and the higher Self; to a *bhakta*, it implies the union between himself and God; and to a *jnani*, it stands for the non-duality of existence.

Raja Yoga is a fully developed philosophy, and is also a practical manual of spiritual practices, in which the focus is on maximising the use of psycho-physical faculties of a person for the realisation of the highest truth. Yogis believe that by controlling one's body, and by focussing the mind, a practitioner can attain anything in life, including *mukti*. The most important of these manuals is *Patmnjali's Yoga Sutras*.

It is believed that Patanjali compiled the *Yoga Sutras* around 2nd/ 3rd century BCE. But, like all other Hindu sacred texts, the controversy rages as to its exact date. The practice of yoga was current in India much before Patanjali. References to this are present in the Upanishads, and elaborate discussions on it have been made in the *Mahabharata*. Patanjali only systematised the philosophy and wrote it down in *sutra* form. Needless to say, the work is a masterpiece of organising an extremely complex subject into a simple, graded and comprehensible discipline.

Since Raja Yoga deals with the mind, it is also known as Hindu psychology. But unlike the present day psychology, the discussion in Yoga is more thorough, meaningful and with a higher purpose. The analysis and remedy of spiritual issues presented here are non-sectarian in nature. This makes Yoga universally relevant and useful.

One branch of Yoga is called *Hatha Yoga*, in which emphasis is laid upon postures, purification of the body and nerves, and breath control. This kind of practise leads to a healthy

body and long life, but does not lead to liberation. Due to this reason, many refuse to accept it as a valid branch of philosophy.

The Philosophy

The philosophy of yoga is based on the Samkhya philosophy, in which the most important concepts are those of the *Purusha* (soul), *Prakriti* (nature), and *tattva* (evolves of Prakriti). Purusha is pure consciousness, whereas Prakriti is matter and energy, and is characterised by activity. This makes the character of Purusha and Prakriti the opposite. However, the process of creation continues only because these two come close together. Why and how this union takes place, is a mystery, which can best be speculated, and hence it is treated as irrelevant in yoga. This union between the matter and the spirit is accepted simply as a fact, and focus is laid upon getting out of this union, instead of finding out the reason for it. This approach makes *Raja Yoga* a practical philosophy.

Prakriti is composed of three *gunas* (lit. qualities, *Sattva*, *Rajas*, *Tamas*) which in turn give birth to elements of the universe and also produces the organs of perception, including the mind. In total there are twenty-four *tattvas* that belong to the realm of Prakriti: Mind, the ten organs, the five elements, the five *tanmatras* (from which are born the senses and elements), Cosmic Ego, Cosmic Mind, and the Prakriti Herself. All these manifestations of nature are caused by the evolution of nature, and hence no external agent is required to materialise it.

Prakriti has no intelligence of its own. As long as the Purusha is present in it, it appears as intelligent, which in reality is borrowed intelligence, the way a planet's light is actually the reflected light of the sun. Purusha is pure intelligence, but when it comes in contact with Prakriti, It starts experiencing the universe through the *buddhi* (intellect), which actually belongs to Prakriti. During perception of any kind by a living being, the senses carry the sensations to its mind, but it is the soul where all different perceptions converge, get unified, and he becomes aware of it. By nature the soul alone is free. People wrongly attribute freedom to the mind, and thus give rise to the false idea of the mind being intelligent.

The Yogi analyses both what is free and what is bound, and realises that the Purusha is free, and is the essence of that knowledge which, coming through the *Buddhi*, becomes intelligence. He also realises that the mind is bound, and that the goal of spiritual practices is to get out of the clutches of the Prakriti, which implies getting out of the mind's area of influence.

When in contact with Prakriti, Purusha forgets His divine nature, starts behaving like a bound entity, and looks at the nature with awe. When He starts experiencing the glamour of Prakriti and outgrowing it, He slowly starts moving towards that state of finality where the entire Prakriti appears small and insignificant to Him. It is then that the universe, as if, falls off from Purusha because of its nothingness. On the other hand, Prakriti has no purpose of its own, except to free the Purusha from Her clutches. This she does by taking Purusha through the experience of objects created by Her.

With this in the backdrop, Yoga philosophy prescribes that a yogi should train himself to outgrow the experiences offered by the nature to attain self knowledge, which is *mukti*.

Unlike Vedanta, in which there is one indivisible Atman, Yoga believes in infinite number of souls. According to Yoga philosophy, this is the reason why the liberation of one person does not liberate others.

Yoga philosophy makes only passing references to life after death. Concepts like heaven, hell, god, sin, etc. do not get much importance here. It is a practical philosophy,

belonging to here and now, with the precision and clarity of a demonstrable experiment in a laboratory.

Yoga Sutras of Patanjali : The Book

Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* belong to the sutra form of literature, which is a distinct type of composition based on short aphoristic statements. This form of literature was designed to be very short, as the texts were intended to be memorised by students in some of the formal methods of scriptural study. It is due to the Sutra form of literature that a vast mass of philosophical works was preserved in India.

Each sutra being highly condensed, another literary form arose in which commentaries on the sutras were added to clarify and explain them. The *Yoga Sutras* also have some famous commentaries, including one by Vyasa, and another by Bhoja, which makes the study of the subject complete.

Patanjali's *Raja Yoga* not only presents yoga as a thorough and consistent philosophical system, it also clarifies many important concepts, like karma, which are common to all traditions of Indian thought. Every later religious text of India, including Vedanta, was strongly influenced by the Yoga philosophy.

The book has 191 sutras, divided into 4 sections (*Pada*) as follows:

1. *Samadhi Pada* (51 sutras): It discusses the various superconscious states that an aspirant attains through meditation.

2. *Sadhan Pada* (55 sutras): It details the method of spiritual practices, known as *Astanga Yoga*.

3. *Vibhuti Pada* (55 sutras): The section deals with the various powers that one acquires during the practise of yoga. However, Patanjali cautions that aspirants must stay away from these, otherwise they won't be able to proceed towards the goal of *mukti*.

4. *Kaivalya Pada* (34 sutras): The section explains the state of liberation, and the ways to attain it through meditation.

The importance of mind in Yoga

We are what our thoughts are – Yoga philosophy uses this fundamental fact as its premise on which it builds its philosophy. So, we need to understand what these thoughts are, and how they work.

According to Swami Vivekananda, "...the eyes are only a secondary instrument, not the organ of vision. The organ of vision is in a nerve centre of the brain. The two eyes will not be sufficient. Sometimes a man is asleep with his eyes open. The light is there and the picture is there, but a third thing is necessary--the mind must be joined to the organ. The eye is the external instrument; we need also the brain centre and the agency of the mind. .. The mind takes the impression farther in, and presents it to the determinative faculty--Buddhi--which reacts. Along with this reaction flashes the idea of egoism. Then this mixture of action and reaction is presented to the Purusha, the real Soul, who perceives an object in this mixture.

"The organs (Indriyas), together with the mind (Manas), the determinative faculty (Buddhi), and egoism (Ahamkara), form the group called the Antahkarana (the internal instrument). They are but various processes in the mind-stuff, called Chitta. The waves of thought in the Chitta are called Vrittis (literally "whirlpool"). What is thought? Thought is a force, as is gravitation or repulsion. From the infinite storehouse of force in nature, the

instrument called Chitta takes hold of some, absorbs it and sends it out as thought. ...

"So we see that the mind is not intelligent; yet it appears to be intelligent. Why? Because the intelligent soul is behind it. You are the only sentient being; mind is only the instrument through which you catch the external world. Take this book; as a book it does not exist outside, what exists outside is unknown and unknowable. The unknowable furnishes the suggestion that gives a blow to the mind, and the mind gives out the reaction in the form of a book, in the same manner as when a stone is thrown into the water, the water is thrown against it in the form of waves. The real universe is the occasion of the reaction of the mind. A book form, or an elephant form, or a man form, is not outside; all that we know is our mental reaction from the outer suggestion. "Matter is the permanent possibility of sensations," said John Stuart Mill. It is only the suggestion that is outside.

"Take an oyster for example. You know how pearls are made. A parasite gets inside the shell and causes irritation, and the oyster throws a sort of enamelling round it, and this makes the pearl. The universe of experience is our own enamel, so to say, and the real universe is the parasite serving as nucleus. The ordinary man will never understand it, because when he tries to do so, he throws out an enamel, and sees only his own enamel. Now we understand what is meant by these Vrittis. The real man is behind the mind; the mind is the instrument in his hands; it is his intelligence that is percolating through the mind. It is only when you stand behind the mind that it becomes intelligent. When man gives it up, it falls to pieces and is nothing. Thus you understand what is meant by Chitta. It is the mind-stuff, and Vrittis are the waves and ripples rising in it when external causes impinge on it. These Vrittis are our universe." (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol 1. P. 200-2)

Yoga is about restraining the mind from acquiring various forms, which it keeps doing all the time. It is through this restraining, with the help of meditative techniques, that one slowly learns to disassociate himself from everything around him. In the state of samadhi (the highest state of meditation), one becomes completely free from every kind of association and gets liberated from the cycle of birth and death. The resulting impression from samadhi obstructs every other impression of the mind accumulated over the ages. By the restraint of even this last impression (which obstructed all other mental impressions) comes the "seedless" Samadhi which destroys the possibility of any future birth. It is in this state that the spiritual aspirant gets established in his true state of existence (*svarup*). This is mukti; this is the goal of yoga.

As in Vedanta, Yoga philosophy also accepts that consciousness belongs to *Purusha* (soul) only. Everything else is the evolute of Prakriti, and hence not self-luminous. Since mind also belongs to Prakriti, it is not self-luminous, and so it does not have inherent intelligence. This is the core of Yoga psychology. The mind gets its reflected intelligence from Purusha, and gets coloured by the impurities born of its contact with the sense objects. The goal of Yoga is to cleanse the mind so that the pure light of intelligence from Purusha dawns upon it and leads it to realisation. That is when the soul becomes free from the snares of Prakriti.

Normally, the mind stays in one of these states -- *kshipta*, scattering; *vikshipta*, darkening; *vimudha*, gathering; *niruddha*, one-pointed, and *ekagra*, concentrated. The first state is of activity and manifests in the form of pleasure or of pain. The second one corresponds to dullness which tends to injure others. These two states are predominant in the demons. The third kind of mental state is natural to the demigods and the angels. The gathering form (*niruddha*) is when the mind struggles to centre itself on one object. This state is commonly found in gods. The last state, the one-pointed (*ekagra*) form, is when the mind tries to concentrate, and finally the concentrated form results in Samadhi. The samadhi is the state when mind cannot acquire one of its above mentioned five states. The mind is finite and

hence can not reach or grasp the knowledge of the Infinite attained in the state of samadhi.

Mind and its forms: The Vrittis

Every functional mind stays in a particular state, characterised by thoughts. The modification that a mind undergoes due to any reason, is called *vritti*. According to Patanjali, Yoga is the conscious stopping of every *vritti* of the mind (Su. I. 2).

Whatever the type of mind (*kshipta*, *vikshipta*, *vimudha*, *niruddha*, *ekagra*), it belongs to one of the five mental states:

a. *Pramana*: Right knowledge acquired through direct perception, reasoning, inference, and through sacred texts and words of teachers.

b. *Viparyaya*: Indiscrimination, which gets born due to a mistaken identity, as when one sees a mirage.

c. *Vikalpa*: Verbal delusion is about the words which have no corresponding reality. For example, A person reacts when he is called a donkey, although the word has no corresponding reality with the truth.

d. *Nidra*: The state of sleep and dream.

e. *Smriti*: Memory. It can come from direct perception, false knowledge, verbal delusion, or sleep.

The goal for a yogi is to get out of all these mental states and stop the *vrittis* associated with them. This requires great practice and perseverance for a long time. The *Yoga Sutras* discuss the ways, means and the result of the conscious control of the mind.

Ashtanga Yoga: The Eight Steps

The eight "limbs" or steps prescribed in the *Sadhan Pada* of the *Yoga Sutras* are: *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana*, *Pranayama*, *Pratyahara*, *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi*. Of these, the first five are called external aids to Yoga (*bahiranga sadhana*), and the last three are called internal aids to Yoga (*antaranga sadhana*).

Yama refers to the five abstentions: *Ahimsa*: non-violence, *Satya*: truth in word & thought, *Asteya*: non-covetousness or non-stealing, *Brahmacharya*: celibacy, *Aparigraha*: Non-acceptance of gifts. Patanjali adds that even for any non-spiritual person, these are great ethical values, and should be practised by all.

Niyama refers to the five observances: *Shaucha*: cleanliness of body and mind, *Santosha*: satisfaction with what one has, *Tapas*: austerities, *Svadhyaya*: Scriptural study and introspection, and *Ishvarapranidhana*: surrender to (or worship of) God.

Asana: It is training oneself into the correct posture for meditation. One should be able to sit comfortably and firmly for long hours in one posture, and hence that posture which is the easiest for one should alone be chosen.

Pranayama: It is the technique of regulating the breath to conserve the psychic energy, called *prana*, and helps in concentrating the mind. Pranayama is divided into *Rechaka* (exhaling), *Puraka* (inhaling), and *Kumbhaka* (restraining). One complete cycle of these three is called Pranayama. In one Pranayama one may repeat three Gayatris, or an equivalent number of any sacred mantra. However, breathing is only one of the many ways through which one can attain concentration.

Pratyahara: It is the withdrawal of senses and finally the mind from the external objects. According to yoga, an organ is only the external manifestation of the mind to do a

particular work.

Dharana: It is the concentration of the mind upon a physical object, such as a flame of a lamp, or the image of a deity by fixing the mind on the lotus of the heart, or on the centre of the head. The practise of this gives rise to a particular kind of mental waves which are not swallowed up by other kinds of thoughts (*vruttis*), but by degrees become prominent, while all the others recede and finally disappear.

Dhyana: When the multiplicity of the waves born during *dharana* gives place to unity, and only one wave is left in the mind, it is called *Dhyana*. However, in this state the act of meditation and the object of meditation remain distinct and separate.

Samadhi: When all forms are given up by the mind during meditation, and the focus is only on the meaning of the object of meditation, thus becoming one with it, it is called Samadhi. In this state, no distinction remains between the act of meditation, and the object of meditation. The mind now goes beyond the limits of reason, and comes face to face with facts which perception, instinct, reason, or testimonies can never reveal.

Types of Samadhi

If the mind can be fixed on a particular point for twelve seconds it is called a Dharana. Twelve such Dharanas make a Dhyana, and twelve such Dhyanas is a Samadhi. The three together make a *samyama*.

Samadhi is of two kinds: *Samprajnāta Samādhi*, and *Asamprajnāta Samādhi*.

A. Samprajnāta Samadhi: Conscious samadhi. In this type of samadhi, the mind remains concentrated on the object of meditation, and hence the consciousness of the object of meditation persists. In the *Samprajnata Samadhi*, all the powers of controlling the nature come. However, despite attaining all the powers through this kind of samadhi, a yogi can again fall back to the state of bondage, since this is not the ultimate state.

The resulting *vrutti* from this kind of samadhi suppresses every other *vrutti* of the mind. It then becomes easy to suppress this *vrutti* too, to attain the ultimate knowledge.

This samadhi is again of four kinds:

1. *Savitarka:* The mind is concentrated upon a gross object of meditation, such as a flame. In the very same meditation, when one struggles to take the elements out of time and space, and think of them as they are, it is called *Nirvitarka*, without question.

2. *Savichāra:* The mind is concentrated upon the subtle aspect of the component of that object, called the *tanmatras*. When in the same meditation one eliminates time and space, and thinks of the fine elements as they are, it is called *Nirvichara*, without discrimination.

3. *Sānandā:* The concentration here is upon a still subtler object of meditation, like the senses, or the thinking organ, *chitta*. When the thinking organ is thought of as bereft of the qualities of activity and dullness, it is then called *Sananda*, the blissful Samadhi.

4. *Sāsmītā:* The mind is concentrated upon the ego-substance with which the self is generally identified. When the mind itself is the object of meditation, which now becomes very ripe and concentrated, and all ideas of the gross and fine materials are given up, then it is called *Sasmita Samadhi*. Persons who attain this state are known as *Videha*, without a gross body. Those yogis, who belong to this state, and get merged in nature without attaining *mukti* are called *Prakritilayas*. Those who do not stop even there, attain *mukti*.

B. Asamprajnāta Samadhi: This is the Perfect Superconscious state that leads to *mukti*. In this state the mind and the object of meditation become one, and all mental

modifications are checked (*niruddha*). In the earlier kind of samadhi, the latent impressions (in seed form) may continue, but when *Asamprajnata* is reached, the Samadhi becomes seedless. There are no more seeds in the mind out of which can be manufactured this plant of life, this ceaseless cycle of birth and death. In this state all old tendencies of restlessness, dullness, and also goodness get destroyed. The good and evil tendencies suppress each other, leaving the Soul in its own glory.

The Process of Knowledge

Every knowledge requires *Shabda* (sound/any external signal), *Artha* (meaning), and *Jnana* (knowledge). The signal coming from the external word is known as *shabda*. The brain receives the signal and processes it for the use of mind; the process is known as *artha*. When the mind grasps the meaning of the *shabda*, it throws out its individualised reaction towards the object from which came the signal. This is *jnana*. These three are distinct processes, but get mixed up in such a fashion as to stay indistinct to a common man. One perceives only their combined effect, known as external object. But, a yogi who has attained a level of meditation can distinguish the three, and when he applies this power of discrimination to various areas of knowledge, he can attain various powers.

Kriya Yoga: The First steps of Growth

For any practitioner of Yoga, benefit comes in two forms :

1. Attainment of Samadhi, and
2. Reduction and control of pain (both physical and mental).

The cause of pain lies in five pain bearing factors: ignorance, egoism, attachment, aversion, and clinging to life. Ignorance (of one's true nature) is the cause of the other four. Egoism is caused when the senses meet the sense objects; attachment is towards pleasurable objects, aversion is towards unpleasant things, and clinging to life is something common to all living beings. Thus starting from self-preservation to the primordial ignorance, a person has enough grounds that can give birth to any type of pain.

Yoga teaches how to destroy the root of these pain bearing causes. These are:

- a) *Tapas* -- practice of austerities
- b) *svadhyaya* -- study and repetition of the mantra
- c) Surrendering fruits of work to God (*Isvara Pranidhāna*). These are also the three *Niyama*, explained earlier.

Karma, Virtue, Sin, and Rebirth

Yoga propounds the concept of *karmāshaya* (receptacle of works, sum total of samskaras). Samskaras are the mental tendencies which are left behind after a work is complete. For example, when a person acts out of anger, the samskaras related to anger are left behind in the mind. These samskaras, in turn, produce new actions, just as a seed produces a tree. The *karmashaya* has its root in the pain-bearing obstructions, as mentioned above. These karma work out in this visible life, or in the unseen future life. The seed, in the form of samskara being there, the fruition comes in the form of species, life, and experience of pleasure and pain.

They bear fruit as pleasure or pain, caused by virtue or vice in this life, and get worked out through different bodies, higher or lower, in the next life. Thus a person engaged in cruel

acts may be born as a vicious animal in the next birth to work out his *samskaras* of cruelty which could not be worked out in this life. The wise man sees through pleasure and pain, and knows that they come to all, and that one follows and melts into the other. So, they try to get out of both pleasure and pain by avoiding misery which is not yet come. With the past karma already worked out, and the present working out, it is only future ones that can be controlled. This is the only way to hasten the process of growth.

Good and bad deeds are not the direct causes in the transformations of the nature of a person, but they act only as breakers of obstacles to his evolution, just as a farmer breaks the obstacles to the course of water in his fields. Once the barrier is broken, the water runs down by its own nature (Su. IV. 3). So, when a wicked person decides to be good and saintly, he only has to break the barriers to let the good actions flow in, which are always in wait to have a free flow. This breaking can be done only by good deeds. The same rule applies to any kind of tendency. In the ultimate state of liberation, the purity and knowledge flows in the mind of their own, since they are the true nature of soul. This means that liberation is not a product of meritorious acts, but is the natural state of the soul.

Desires and karma can work out only in the right environment with the help of right body. This means that the unfulfilled desires and unfinished karma would remain stored up, waiting for the proper environment, and the proper body. This results in rebirth, and also makes the cycle of birth and death continue. To get out of this, one has to destroy the seeds of karma that are stored up which can be done with the help of meditation and the practise of values.

God in Yoga

In the Yoga philosophy, God (*Ishwara*) is a special soul (*Purusha*), untouched by misery, actions, their results, and desires. Interestingly, Samkhya philosophy, on which Yoga is based, does not accept the existence of God in any form.

The Isvara (god) of the Yogis is not same as God, the Creator of the universe, as is commonly understood in religion. According to Yoga, the creation is the work of Prakriti, and hence Isvara has nothing to do with Creation. According to them, Isvara is the Soul with unlimited knowledge, and is also the Teacher of teachers. The worldly teachers are all limited, but He is the Teacher of infinite knowledge. His manifesting word is Aum, and one can attain samadhi by repeating the sacred Aum, and by thinking on its meaning. One may also get the same results by meditating on God.

Problems and how to counter them

Disease, mental laziness, doubt, lack of enthusiasm, lethargy, clinging to sense-enjoyments, false perception, non-attaining concentration, and falling away from the state when obtained, are the chief obstructions in the path of yoga. Also, when the practice of yoga has been misdirected, the result is grief, mental distress, tremor of the body, irregular breathing, accompany non-retention of concentration. However, they are not dangerous, and one can take steps to cure them. Incidentally, these also trouble a common man. Yoga looks at the very root of these problems and offers ways to counter them.

According to yoga, there are five sources of pain, which are at the root of every conceivable problem that a common man, and also a yogi face. These are – *avidya* (ignorance about one's true divine nature), *asmita* (identification with objects around himself), *raga* (attachment), *dvesha* (aversion), and *abhinivesha* (strong sense of clinging to life).

To counter the pains born of these five, one should practice *maitri* (friendship with all

those who are happy), *karuna* (compassion to all those in misery), *mudita* (joyfulness towards all that is good), and *upeksha* (indifference towards the bad). Whenever the yogi feels disturbed, he should direct these counter feelings towards the objects from where the disturbance is coming. These practices pacify the mind, and make it fit for higher achievements.

Steps of Growth

The growth of a yogi comes in seven stages:

1. The restlessness of the mind to know a thousand things of the world stops. The conviction comes to mind that what was to be known, has been known.
2. The mind goes beyond feeling pain at anything of the universe. Nothing can hurt him any more.
3. One becomes a *sarvajna* (attains full knowledge).
4. There is a complete drop of the sense of duty towards anything in the world.
5. The mind becomes completely free of any kind of agitation. Like a stone fallen on the ground that can never go up the mountain peak again, the mind becomes permanently restful.
6. A complete control over mind comes, which means that it can be resolved back to its ultimate cause, Prakriti.
7. One finally gets established in one's Self.

Powers that a Yogi gains

Yoga declares that all power of the universe flows from the mind, be it individual, or universal (*mahat*). A Yoga practitioner can gain any number of powers simply by practising the related disciplines. It may be noted that these powers have actually been seen manifested in great yogis. According to Patanjali, the *Siddhis* (powers) are attained by birth, chemical means, power of words, mortification, or concentration. He also adds that among all, the mind which has attained to Samadhi, alone is the highest. A person attaining powers through medicines, words of blessings, or mortifications, still has desires, but that man who has attained Samadhi through concentration is free from all desires, and hence superior to all.

Some of the powers that a yogi can attain are:

- * All enmities and violence cease in presence of the yogi who is established in *Ahimsa* (non violence).
- * A yogi established in truthfulness, can get for himself or others, anything that he desires; established in non-stealing, one gets all the wealth; when established in continence, one gets unsurpassed energy; established in non-acceptance of gifts, a yogi gets the memory of his previous lives; from contentment comes happiness; by repetition of a mantra comes the realisation of that particular deity.
- * All knowledge comes to a yogi who succeeds in attaining *samyama* (the three--Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi--together). He can even understand the language of animals and birds by distinguishing between *Shabda* (sound), *Artha* (meaning), and *Jnana* (knowledge).
- * By applying *samyama* on the bodily signs of others, a yogi can know the nature of that person's mind.

* A yogi can become unseen if he wishes so, by making *samyama* on his body.

* By focussing on the strength of an elephant (or any other such animal), a yogi gains that kind of strength. This also explains why one should be careful about the company one keeps.

* Focussing on the sun, the moon, and the pole star one gains the knowledge of the world, the stars, and the celestial motions respectively.

* By focussing on the higher states of mind (*sattva*), one gets supernatural hearing, touching, seeing, tasting and smelling; By focussing on the throat, one controls hunger; by focussing on the heart, one gets the knowledge of the minds.

* It is easy for a yogi to walk on water, thorns etc. He can move at the speed of the mind, become small, become heavier than a mountain, look exceptionally beautiful, and can get surrounded by light.

Patanjali, however, cautions that these are powers in the worldly state, but are great obstacles to the attainment of the highest samadhi, which brings liberation.

Mukti

When the soul realises that it depends on nothing in the universe, and desires nothing, then It attains *Kaivalya* (lit. uniqueness, freedom) and perfection. This comes when the intellect (*sattva*), which usually is a mixture of purity and impurity, has been made as pure as the Purusha itself. It is then that the Sattva reflects only on real purity, and an aspirant realises that he had neither birth nor death, nor need for heaven or earth. He realises that he neither came nor went, it was nature which was moving, and that movement was reflected upon the soul.

Swami Vivekananda explains liberation,

"Nature's task is done, this unselfish task which our sweet nurse, nature, had imposed upon herself. She gently took the self-forgetting soul by the hand, as it were, and showed him all the experiences in the universe, all manifestations, bringing him higher and higher through various bodies, till his lost glory came back, and he remembered his own nature. Then the kind mother went back the same way she came, for others who also have lost their way in the trackless desert of life. And thus is she working, without beginning and without end. And thus through pleasure and pain, through good and evil, the infinite river of souls is flowing into the ocean of perfection, of self-realisation." (*Complete Works, Vol. I. 304.*)

Ref:

Swami Vivekananda, *Raja Yoga*.

Bhoja Vritti

